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Phonetic Notes on Urdu Records Nos. 6825 AK  
and 6826 AK

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THESE records were made in 1920 to the dictation of a well-known professional story-teller, Bāqir 'Alī, who belonged to Delhi.

A phonetic transcript which has been published is of great value for the study of Urdu sounds. I made the original transcript of both records and had two proofs printed. Professor Daniel Jones, Professor of Phonetics in the University of London, who has to take responsibility for the publication of all transcripts in this series, went over my second proof, made some alterations, and prepared the final proof, which was ultimately printed. He is, therefore, responsible for the transcripts in their present form. I have, however, my proofs before me. The differences between his final print and my proofs are slight, and this article gives our joint views. Where there is any necessity for distinguishing them they are marked with the initials J. for his views and B. for mine.

The importance of these transcripts consists in the fact that the records still exist, and may be heard by any one who wishes to test the statements made. It is one thing to claim to have listened to a particular speaker and taken down his sounds. The speaker disappears, and beyond the author's reputation for accurate recording, there is no certainty that the transcription is correct. It is a very different thing when, as in this case, the speaker cannot disappear, and what is equally important, cannot alter his pronunciation.

The records afford me much pleasure, for they support, in almost every detail, views which I have long held as to Urdu sounds, and taught my students. They were given ten years ago in the *Bulletin*, Vol. II, iii, 339 ff. Practically all that article expresses my views to-day.

CEREBRAL SOUNDS, called also retroflex. The transcriptions do not indicate the exact point on the palate touched by the tip of the tongue, but the introductory remarks make it clear. "f, d, n, r: point of contact not far behind the teeth ridge, in a few instances on the teeth ridge." This is what we should expect. Similarly Dr. Mohiuddin Qadri in *Hindustani Phonetics* says of / and d: "their point of articulation is just behind the teeth ridge" (p. 73), and of r: "the tip of the tongue strikes against the teeth ridge" (p. 92).



For the benefit of those who wish to study Urdu cerebrals, I indicate here those which in these records are specially far forward. I make the statement on my own responsibility. I have not consulted anyone else. The Nos. refer to page and line.

*l* in *ciṭha* 2.8, *lotai* 3.18. *r* in *bara* 1.1, *larke* 1.6, *thori* 3.3, *bare* 7.1. *q* in *khandā* 5.15, *qub* 6.4, *buqḥa* 6.24, 7.2, (but not in 7.3).

In *khatar* for *kaṭar* 5.16, and *latakne* for *latākne* 6.12 the *t* is dental. These are mere slips.

In the following instances the *r* is rather fricative:—*baya* 1.1, *thore* 1.5, *dara* 3.6, *larke* 3.8, *bayhā* 3.16, *bare* 7.1, *pakra* 7.12.

*r* is either a faint labio-dental *r* or a *ṛ*. J. printed them all as *r* (except one *ko* 5.4, i.e. *ṛo*). In my proof I marked several as *ṛ*, meaning *ṛ*. It is always safe to advise English speakers to say *r*, and not *ṛ*. An English *r* always sounds wrong.

*y* between vowels is often *ṛ*. Thus the ending *ṛgh* occurs 13 times. B. records *aḥa* every time; J. *aḥa* 12 times, *aḥa* once. English people greatly exaggerate the *y* quality of the sound. Similarly the ending *-igh* occurs 8 times. Both B. and J. transcribed it every time.

*ay*. I unhesitatingly teach my students to ignore '*ay*', in accordance with the usual practice of educated Delhi men in ordinary conversation. In the records there are eleven words containing '*ay*' when written in Urdu script. J. has recorded it in two out of the eleven. I did not consider it strong enough to be worth recording in any. This means that in the records the '*ay*' of the grammars does not exist, and all descriptions of how to pronounce it go for nothing. Even in words like *amāl*, *ma'āl*, *varṣ*, *yugāṣṭh*, where it would be easy to pronounce '*ay*' there is no trace of it. The other day a Delhi man, who is himself a lecturer on Urdu, told me that there was no difference at all between *bād*, wind, and *bād*, after.

I will, however, add this. I have heard Urdu speakers, when speaking rather self-consciously, pronounce, with a slight restriction of throat muscles, vowels which immediately precede or follow the letter '*ay*'.

*Humay*, which is only another name for glottal stop, is not recorded at all. It is important to note this in view of statements sometimes made. *Humay* exists solely in writing.

*h* is generally not an independent sound, but occurs before *t* and *ḍ*. The word *śāḥ* occurs four times, and every time is pronounced *saḥ*. *caḥ* is once *caḥ* and once *caḥ*.

*h* is sonant except in the combinations *kh*, *ch*, *ṭh*, and *ph*. We may consider it under two main headings: (1) *h* initial or immediately following a vowel; (2) *h* immediately following a consonant, to which it is more or less closely attached. The chief point which concerns us is to what extent is it omitted. In our records we have the following instances. (The word "unpronounced" must be understood as qualified by the addition "or at least inaudible".)

(1) (a) Initial, as *ḥissa*, *ḥāṭṭ*, *ḥai*, 56 times pronounced; 6 unpronounced (in *ḥai* 4; *ḥṛ*, *ḥue*, once each; *ḥue* appears as *ūe*, printed *ev*).

(b) After vowel before *es*. (including the combinations *rah-gae*, *rah-mahīn*, *kah-sunāṭā*), e.g. *gunāḡar*, *bahne*, *ḡahṭān*; pron. 12, unpron. 0.

(c) After vowel: pron. only in the word *tarḥ* 3 times; unpron. 17; viz. *ḡh* je 14; *rah* ḡo, *nūh*, *ḡugh* once each. The *h* of *ḡh* is never heard in these records, even though twice it is followed by a vowel. *rah* occurs once and is followed by a vowel, but the *h* is not sounded. The phrase *ḡugh hai* is pronounced *ḡaḡa e*.

(d) Between vowels: as *kahā*, *maḡḡat*, *surḡh*, *suḡāre*, together with the words *shah*, *rahm*, *ḡah*, which like other similar words are invariably dissyllables. *h* pron. 31; unpron. 16. All these 16 are in the second record, which is more conversational than the first. They are *kahā* 8, *nahī* 5, *suḡān* 2, *ḡahā* 1.

(2) *es*. + *h*: (a) Initial; examples: *choḡā*, *thoy*, *ḡhinnā*, *ḡukḡā*; pron. 57; unpron. 0.

(b) Between vowels; either with single *es*. as *carḡo*, *inḡo*, *āḡh*, *deḡā*; or with double *es*. as *acḡā*, *bieḡe*, *buḡḡā*, *sunḡā*, *burḡh*, *kuḡḡahḡ*; pron. 26, unpron. 8 (*inḡe* 4, all in more solemn first record; *ḡhṛ* 4, all in second).

Of the 26, 17 are with single *es*. and 9 with double. There is no instance of *h* omitted after double *es*.

(c) Final; never pron.; unpron. 14, viz. *sonḡh* 3, *inḡh* 2, *ḡāḡh* 4, *kieḡh*, *stīḡh* 2, *deḡh*, *buḡh*, *kieḡh* 1 each. *h* is not pronounced in any of these. In 7 the *h* follows a sonant sound, and in 7 a sord. We should, however, notice that there is no instance of *-ḡh* or *-ḡh*.

(d) Followed by *es*. pron. 2, *nīḡh* twice; unpron. 1, *ḡahḡar*.

VOWELS. The two most interesting vowels are those written in Roman script *-ai* and *-au*. We are almost always told that they are pronounced like *ai* in English *aisle*, and like *-au* in German *Maus* or *auf*, or *ow* in English *how*. Actually they are like *a* in "man" and



*au* in "maul". In both cases they may be either single vowels or diphthongs. When *ai* is a diphthong the second vowel is a variety of *e* (e or e<sub>2</sub>), and for *au* the second part is *o*.

The records confirm these statements.

The sound *ai* occurs 52 times and every time both of us have transcribed it *æ* with or without a second *e* or *e*. Actually J. recorded it 26 times as simple *æ*, and 26 as a diphthong *æe* or *æe*. B. 28 times as *æ* and 24 as *æe*, *æe*. The important point is that neither of us ever recorded the vowel in "aisle".

The following are details:—

*ai* or *ai* final, as in *hai*, *ai*, *hai*, *mai*, 28, of which 22 are *æe* or *æe* and 6 *æ*.

Not final, as in *maiden*, *naica*, *aisa*, *paida*, *saf* 6 times. Here B. had a majority of simple *æ* and J. a majority of *æe*.

*ai* for *-a* followed by *h*, as in *shahr*, *ghilvan*, *bulwa*, *raim*, *gah*, *kah*, *rah*. This occurred 18 times, and every time B. J. transcribed *æ*. Therefore stressed *-ah*, final, or followed by *cs*, is always pronounced *æ*. *au* occurs in *aur* 21 times; *danda* 2; and once each in *darya*, *aula*, *faulda*, *garrahi*, *avbaah*, *mukha*. (This last word is often *prn. makhā*) 29 altogether. The records show almost always the sound of English *-au* in *maul*. J. records 28 out of 29 as *o* or *oo*; in the 21 cases of *aur* he has *or* 20 times and *ar* once. I have marked one *aur* as *ar*, and in other words have twice transcribed the vowel as *o*; elsewhere always with *o* or *oo*.

In the remaining words J. has *o* 5 times and *oo* 3 times. Thus, altogether, out of the 29, J. has a simple vowel *o* 25 times, *a* once, and the diphthong 3 times. B. had the diphthong only twice.

Conclusion. The normal *prn.* of the vowel is always either *o* or *oo*, and the simple *o* is much the commoner of the two.

The vowel *a*, stressed or unstressed, usually tends towards *e*.

The influence of *h* on preceding short vowels. I explained this in detail in the article referred to. The records before us confirm the statements there made.

Stressed *-ah*. When *-ah* is either followed by a *cs*, or final (and stressed), it is not *ad* but *æd*. There are 18 instances here, and in every case the vowel is *æ*. There is not a single case of *a*.

It should also be noted that *raim*, *ghil*, *shahr*, *ghum*, written as monosyllables, of which there are 8 instances, are always disyllables. Students should be made to pronounce them so, and plainly told that to pronounce them as monosyllables is wrong.

*'ula*, e.g. *ruhā*, *kahā* (so too *ghah*, *rah*), i.e. *'ul* followed by *a*, is always *'āha* *'āha*.

The preliminary notes say that the first vowel in words like *kahā* (sometimes transcribed *A*) is *a*-like. This may be seen also from the transcription. Of words of this type there are 18. J. has the *a* in 13 cases and *A* in 5 (it being understood that this *A* is *a*-like). B. transcribes it in every case *-a*.

Few examples occur of the other cases mentioned loc. cit., p. 545. *'ih* and *'ul* final or before *cs*, become *e* and *o*. Here we see it in the word *ghh*, which is always *je* and in the one case of *rah* which is *ro* or *īo*. *'ah* followed by *r*, *o*, *r* is unchanged, see *kahi*, *kahū*, *nahī*, *nāl*.

No conclusion can be drawn from the word *nahī*, for it is unique, with several common pronunciations. One may hear *nahī*, *nāl*, *nī*, *nehī*, *nei*, *nahī*, *nai*.

*h* followed by *u* (not *u*) tends towards *a*, e.g. *bahut*, *pahonca* (in the record the *u* has become absorbed in the *h*).

In connection with the English habit of reducing final unstressed *a* and *e* to *a*, and *i* to *i* it is worthy of note that in these records we have final unstressed *-a* 168 times, all of which are pure *-a*; final unstressed *-e* 110 times, every time correctly uttered *-e*; final unstressed *-i* 98 times, every time correctly uttered *-i*, never *i*. Baḡir 'Alī, when reciting, was apt to heighten final *e* to *i* or *i*, *o* to *o* or *u*. Thus the word *kī* usually pronounced *ke* or *kī*, is sometimes as high as *kī* in the records, and is rarely *ke*.

The *īghaf* occurs 8 times, as in *afḡal e pudarī*, *nūn e shudhāna*. It is always *e*, never *i*. This is the more remarkable in view of the speaker's frequent use of high vowels, but it is correct.

Nasal Vowels. Apart from recognized nasal vowels, there is a tendency to nasalize all vowels in contact with nasal consonants. Thus *u* may become *uē*, and *ghānō ghānō*.

In words usually written with a final *cs*, + *r* there is always a vowel before the final *r*; e.g. *fahrr*, *shahr*, become *faxar*, *ṣaḡer*.

The negative *na* is often joined to the following word and pronounced *na* or *ne*.

The most important conclusions from the records are:—

(1) *ai*, *au* are pronounced *æ* (sometimes *æe*) and *o*; thus *paidā* is *pæda* (or *pæda*), and *tauba* is *taḡa*.

(2) The point of contact for the cerebral sounds *ṭ*, *ḡ*, *r* is slightly behind the teeth ridge.

(3) *'au* may be ignored.

(4) *ghf* is very weak, often not distinguishable from *kḡf*.



## APPENDIX

## 6794 AK. Prodigal Son

Recited by Maulānā Saifi, of Lucknow, May 16, 1920

Transcribed from the record by T. Grahame Bailey

In order to complete these notes, I add a few remarks on a Lucknow record of the "Prodigal Son". So far as I know, Professor Jones has not heard it. It does not differ much from the two Delhi ones, and for conversation, as distinct from recitation, it is a safer guide. This is specially noticeable in its pronunciation of *au*, *ai*, final *-o*, and final *-o*.

ek jaks ke do larke the; choṭe ne bap se kaha "Abba jān, mal mālā me mera husse mujhe de dijiye. us ne apna sarmaṛā donō ko bat di, thore hi dinō me choṭa beṭa apni cizē samet samet ek dūr dūras maqam par calta hua. or vāhā apna mal badalī me uṛa diā. jab vo kul dōlat barbad kar cuga, to us mulk me sakt kal parā, or vo nan o jabina ko mohṭay ho gēa. us vaqt ek rā'is ke darvaze pā parā, jo vo use apne khetō par suar carāne bhey diā; fāga kaji se je nobat pahūc thi ki jo ki bhūsi jo suarō ko di jāi ē, agar use koi detā, to usi se bakhūji apna pet bhār letā; lekin koi itna bhi vāvadār nā thā.

jab vo apne hoj me aēa to scene laga ki mere bap ke krne ki mazdūr bāfaraḡat khate pite hā, kuch andāz bhi karte hā, or mē bhukō mar rāhā hū; bap si jakar kīū nā kahī ki mē xuda kā or ap ka guṇahḡar hū, ab mē ap ka farzand kēhe jāne ke laṛq nehi, mujhe apne mazdūrō ke zūmme me rakh lijiye. pas uṭkar sidhā apne bap ko pas calā. abhi fasile par thā ki bap ne use ate dekha, dorakar gale laga diā or pjar karne laga. beṭe ne kaha "Abba, mē xudavand o kām ki or ap ki nazārō me mujrim hū, or ab is kabil nehi ki ap ka beṭa kēhlāū". lekin bap ne apne mulazimō ko hukam diā "acchi se acchi pojak, gūṭhī, jūta rse pinhāo, or ek farbeh bachra jakar kabūb lagāo ki sab mēze se khāē or xūjiā manāē, is lie ki mera beṭa marīar zinda hua hā, khokar phir milā hā."

vo log tēhl pēhl me masruf hue; bāra beṭa us vaqt khetō par thā; palāṭkar jab makā magan ke karib pōhūcā to vaks o farōd ki avāz kēn me ai; ek mulazim ko buṭakar darjāit kiā ki jī kīā ho rāhā hā? "us ne arz kiā "ap ke bhāi sab se hue hā, or ap ke Abba jīā ne unē sahī salāmāt pakar ek farbeh bachre ki kurbanī karāi hā." je sunkar vo naraz hua or ḡhar ke andār nā gēa. us vaqt bap nikla or use manāne laga. asnā ē javāb me bap se us ne kaha "ḡarīb xuda kā, itni mudāṭ se mē ap ki xidmāt kar rāhā hū or kisi vaqt

ap ki hukam udhī nehi ki, lekin kabhi ap ne ek bakri kā bacca bhi mujhe nā diā ki mē apne dōstō ki dāvāt kartā. magar jab ap kā je lṛkā aēa jis ne ap ki dōlat ājiāji me uṛa dālī to ap ne us ke lie mōṭā tārā bachra zāda karāēa hā." us ne kaha "beṭa, tum to hamejā se mere sat ho, or mere pas jo kuc hī hā vo sab tumārā hā. lekin jāsān karne or kuj hone kā jehī mahāl hā, ki tumhārā bhāi marīar zinda hua hā, khokar phir milā hā."

## Notes

*au* and *ai* are single vowels *o* and *a* respectively; thus *dauṭal* is *dōlat* and *maṭ* is *mē*.

Final *-e* and *-o* are not so high as in the Delhi records, *ē* is almost always *e*; when very markedly so, it has been transcribed *a*, otherwise *a*. For this vowel the Delhi records are preferable.

*i* is nearly always *ī*.

*i* and *ī* have point of contact generally just behind teeth ridge; in a few cases a little further back.

*i* tends to be fricative; point of contact not far from teeth ridge. In the record it occurs eleven times; of these nine or ten are rather fricative, and only one or two have a real strike. The strike pronunciation is to be recommended.

*h* is *h* except in *kā, th, ch, ph*.

*ʾim*. Words written with *ʾim* occur five times, but the *ʾim* is never pronounced.

*qūf*. There are eleven instances of *qūf*. The pronunciation varies from *q* to a back variety of *f*, on the whole nearer *q* than *f*.

§ 1. l. 5. *cuga* for *cuka*.

§ 3. l. 2. *maka* magan is a reciter's slip for *makan*.